

The Scarf

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The Scarf

by [LivingOnTheEdge5](#)

Summary

Willy Graham is afraid of nightmares. His daddy thinks he can help.
Hannictober October 23rd prompt: "Scarves"

Notes

Written for Hannictober's October 23rd prompt- "Scarves" because I love me some little Will Graham.

"Daddy?"

"Yes, buddy?"

"W'ars my baby pic'tures?"

Frank Graham looks up from the carburetor he's flushing for a neighbor. "They're in a box in my closet...why'da you ask?"

Little Willy squirms unhappily; daddy is sad because of his question. "I wanna see 'em...Jeannie has a whole book of pic'tures from when she was a baby...I wanna see mine...I wanna see..."

Frank winces; he knows what's coming.

Little Willy bows his head; "I wanna see mama."

Frank's eyes smart, his baby boy looks so defeated. "Tha's alright buddy." The boy looks up at his father's forgiving tone. "You ken see 'em whenever you wants to... hand me that Goop thar."

Willy's face brightens. " k' daddy!" He says, scampering over to the work bench to grab a tub of cleaner. "Dis one?"

"Dat's it," Frank says, wiping his hand on an oily rag. "Ken you git the top off?"

"Yah...I'm... purty...strong," Willy says uncertainly as he wrestles with the tight lid. "Der it goes!"

The lid pops off and Willy hands the container to his father. "Smells weird!"

Frank laughs and scoops out a portion. "Tis a bit strong, but it does the trick!"

The man finishes cleaning his hands while the boy watches. "Ken I hav' some daddy? My hands r' purty dirty too!"

The mite holds up his clean, pink hands and his father laughs. "Jus' a little bit son, waste not want not."

Willy nods and helps himself to a tiny portion. Then mimicking his father, he carefully rubs it into his palms. "Thar!" He crows, holding up his hands. "All clean!"

"Tha's right!" His father praises. "Now let's wash it off and go see 'bout those photos."

Frank helps his six year old wash and dry his hands then holds the screen door open for him. "How's 'bout we have a couple slices of cobbler whiles your lookn' at those pictures?"

"Yeah!" The boy enthuses. "Where they at?"

Frank bops his son on his nose. "They's in a place yur not to go snooping 'round in young man!"

Willy giggles; he knows his daddy is only teasing.

"Cross my hart 'n hope ta die...sticka needle in ma eye!" The boy chants, tracing an 'X' across his scrawny chest, his blue eyes shine with sincerity.

Frank cradles the back of his son's head with a hand rough and cracked from work, but gentle nonetheless. "A'right...let's git em."

The man leads the way through the back hallway, through the kitchen, front room and into the back bedroom.

Will looks around; his father doesn't spend much time in this room; it is at once familiar and foreign to the young boy.

As Frank turns on the closet light and begins pulling down boxes, the boy wanders towards the vanity and it's attached mirror. He entertains himself by making a few faces, and is still giggling when he spies a framed photograph. He comes closer to examine it. It's an old black and white photo of a family; two little boys, one on a pony, an old lady in a black dress and apron, and a younger woman.

The boys are yellow haired, barefoot, and wearing only bib overalls, the young woman is wearing a print dress blowing sideways in a breeze; her hand shades her face, her features obscured by shadow.

"Who're dey daddy?"

Frank leans out of the closet. "Wats that son?"

"Them...here in dis old pic'ture."

His arms filled with pasteboard boxes, Frank cranes to see what his son is pointing at. "Oh, well, dat's my daddy, his big brother, his mama, and her mama." Frank steps back inside the closet.

Little Willy's gaze returns to the photo. Carefully, he picks it up and studies it. *Dem boys 'r sad...their mamas sad.*

The child's eyes fill with sympathetic tears. *No daddy...der daddy's gone.*

"Willy?"

Frank is back with a shoebox in his hand. "Are you well son?"

His child looks up at him with eyes full of quivering tears. "They's so sad daddy."

Frank drops the box on the dresser and scoops his boy up in his arms. Willy wraps his thin arms around his father's neck and begins to sob. "He left 'em...didn' he?! Lef 'em jus' like

mama lef' us!"

Frank cradles his son and rubs his back as he walks out of the room, and through the small house, a circuit they're both familiar with.

Frank knows that every so often his son suffers from these spells and the only thing to do is offer comfort and wait it out. The man walks and hums until his child's sobs lessen then stop altogether.

Wordlessly, Frank goes into the yellow kitchen and pours a glass of water; hiccups are the inevitable byproduct of one Willy's "attacks."

The boy sips the water then rests his head back onto his daddy's shoulder. "Thanks daddy," he whispers.

"Dat's alright son...you ready for dat cobbler?"

Against his neck, still wet from the child's tears, Frank feels the boy shake his head. "No, " Willy sniffs, "but ken we still see the photos?"

Frank smiles and runs his hand over the boy's head. "Shure...let's git you cleaned-up and settled."

Fifteen minutes later, Willy is secure on his father's lap on his great- grandmother's blue velvet love seat. He runs his hand over the fabric's fuzzy surface and feels his body finally relax.

Frank begins pulling photos from the box. "Here you is...jus' a little grub."

Willy frowns at the photo of a bald, red-faced baby swaddled in a blanket.

"Ewww...dat's me?!"

"Yup...two days old....'n here's yur mama, back when we was kids."

Frank, concerned about a repeat of Will's attacks flashes the picture briefly before putting it away.

"Ken I see it?"

Reluctantly, Frank retrieves the snapshot and hands it to his son. "Hol ' it by the edges," he adjures and sets it onto his son's palm.

Willy stares down at the photo. *Dat's mama...she's purty...and happy.*

The girl, sixteen or seventeen is laughing as she holds a giant cone of cotton candy. Her hair is brown and wavy, her eyes are dark and sparkling with fun. She's standing in front of a carnival ride; the trees in the background are the color of fall: bright yellow, orange, and

brown. The boy pours over every detail of the image. His mother-to-be is wearing light jeans, a white t-shirt; around her neck is an enormous blue and white knitted scarf. It wraps around her three times; the tassels streaming -out behind.

Solemnly, the child hands the picture back to his father. "Is...is dar one with me n' her?"

Frank slowly returns the photo back in the box. "No son...she...she was poorly...didn't want no pictures taken."

Willy twists to look-up into his father's face and Frank forces himself to smile. "But she loved you! She always wanted a litt' boy...it's jus...she got sick...couldnt tak' care of her ownself, nevermind a husban' and a litt' baby."

Willy settles back against his father's broad chest and strokes the plush armrest of the loveseat. He wishes he were still little enough to suck his thumb. "Hmmmm...daddy?"

"Yes sport?"

"Ken I sleep in yur room t'night?"

"No, sport...you needs ta sleep in yur own bed."

Willy feels like he's being pulled apart; he knows he won't be able to sleep a wink. "Pluuuuse?" He stutters. "Jus' for one night?"

Frank rubs his face against the back of his son's head; considering. "You'ns worrit 'bout nightmares?"

Willy stiffens and Frank knows he's guessed correctly, he tightens his hold on the young child. "Youn's know that dreams are jus' your mind's homemade movies." The man taps the child's crown. "Yur brain gits bored whiles you sleep, so it hasta make-up stories till you wake...t'ain't nothin' to be scared of."

Willy wishes he was as brave as his daddy, but he knows he isn't. The idea that his mind is busy spinning scary stories while he sleeps is not comforting in the least; even the presence of old Hambone snoring away on his rag rug is not talisman enough against a night of bad dreams.

The boy cuddles against his father and says nothing. Frank glances down into the box; his eye catching the photo of the girl smiling happily into the camera. His throat tightens; then he has an idea. "You'ns wanna see anymore?"

Willy shakes his head sadly and Frank gives his head a quick kiss before setting him on his feet. "Hows 'bout you go feed the stock 'n I'll pick some corn; we'll have a real nice fish fry. We ken even ask the McAllister's over iffen you want. "

"Dat's okay, "Willy says mournfully," I don' feel much like company t'night."

Frank hides his smile at his son's old-man mannerism.

"Alrighty, t'will be jus' the two of us...and tonight, I hav' a notion I think yur gonna like."

After the boy's bath, Frank hears Willy's prayers and tucks him into bed.

The boy's eyes are wide and fearful as he peers over the patchwork quilt; dreading what he is certain is to come.

Frank sighs and strokes the curls off his son's forehead.

"member what I tol' you? Dreams aren't real son, they's smoke that disappears whens you wake."

Willy drops his gaze; he doesn't need a lecture, he needs to sleep in his father's bed.

Frank pats the quilt then stands up. "I think I have somethin' dat might just do da trick."

He goes out of the boy's room and returns with the blue and white striped scarf from the photo. Frank sits on the edge of the boy's bed and sets it down. "Here...tis a bit of yur mama and me...together we ken protect yur sleep."

Tentatively, the child reaches out from his bedclothes and touches the scarf; it's softer and fluffier than it appeared in the photo, nearly as soft as a teddy bear. Instinctively he brings it to his face, closes his eyes and sniffs.

The garment smells of his daddy's aftershave, soap...and something else...something sweet and bright that tugs at his mind.

"at's yur mama's scent yur smelling," the man explains. "It's...well...it's tha one she always wore...tha one she left a bottle of behind."

Frank helps Willy fold the scarf so half is along his pillow and the other runs alongside the edge of the bed. He watches his son tangle his fingers into the weave.

"Ya see?" The man says with satisfaction. "She made dat thar for me, and now I'm givin' it to you."

Willy lifts Frank's own eyes to his father. "D'anks daddy...I likes it a lot."

"Good! You wan' Hambone?"

Willy strokes the scarf and rubs his little face against it. "No...I'm good...night daddy."

Frank smiles and kisses Willy on his soft cheek. "Night sport," he murmurs, " sweet dreams."

Willy smiles back, and turns onto his side, sighs and falls immediately asleep.

Frank closes the door a crack, turns on the hall light, and goes out to do the supper dishes.

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